Negotiation Skills: The Missing Ingredient to Career Success

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About the Speaker

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Overview

- This session is about soft skills in the workplace, including negotiation skills
- Not how to get the best deal on a car, house or new set of luggage
- Lessons learned from 30+ years as an employee, contractor, consultant, and finally a business owner
I posted on social media a survey about what soft skills do content strategists need to be successful.

We received almost 100 different answers.

We organized them by commonalities.

Here are the top 10 answers.
Soft Skills Survey Results

- Relationship Mgmt: 7.8%
- Negotiation: 15.7%
- Self-awareness: 9.8%
- Patience: 13.7%
- Flexibility: 11.8%
- Empathy: 11.8%
- Curiosity: 5.9%
- Leadership: 5.9%
- Vision:
Soft Skills Top Answer: Negotiation

- Workplace Negotiation Skills
- Diplomacy
- Conflict Resolution
- Relationship Building
- Finding Common Ground
- Influence Without Authority
- Managing Project Scope
What is Negotiation?
What is Negotiation?

- To attempt to come to an agreement on something through discussion and compromise (Dictionary.com)
- The process of achieving agreement through discussion (Wiktionary.com)
- Conferring, discussing, or bargaining to reach agreement (Websters)
What is Negotiation?

Latin *negotiatio* < Latin *negotiatio* ("the carrying on of business, a wholesale business") < *negotiari* ("to carry on business")
What is Negotiation?

Negotiation is the art of giving up as little of what you have in order to get what you want.

Jack Molisani
What are You Negotiating?

- Your Compensation
- Project Scope
- Project Deadlines
- Resources
- Headcount
- Budgets
Basics

- One negotiates to get to a common agreement

- I think all negotiations have to be either Win-Win or Lose-Lose to be considered “successful”

  A sale: The buyer got the product (or service) they wanted at a price they could afford, the seller still made a profit

  A war: Split the territory in dispute. Neither side is happy, but it’s better than fighting
Before You Start

- Chellie Campbell, author of *Zero to Zillionaire*, talks about doing business with “Your People”

- Your People value your services and are happy to pay your rates for a quality product or service. They *want* to strike a deal that is good for both parties.

- Find Your People and negotiate with them.
Before You Start

- Do your homework
- Find out what the going rate is on the market (buying or selling)
- Set your success criteria: what’s great, what’s acceptable, when to walk away
- More on these later in the presentation
At the Start

- Don’t just start with numbers. Try and build some rapport first.

- Find out what is important to them, and let them know what is important to you.

- Then try and come to an agreement where you both win.
Opening Offers: Theirs

- When possible, let the other side make the opening offer.
- That is the first insight you get into what they have in mind as a fair price.
- This lets you know if the deal is even worth pursuing.
Opening Offers: Theirs

- Warning: People who try to talk you down to some ridiculous price saying “you’ll make it up in volume” or “I can pay you more on the next job” are not Your People!
There will be times when you will have to make the opening offer, such as stating your bill rate or salary expectations in an interview.

I have a rule of thumb: The better the interview went, the higher the number I quote when they ask for my bill rate.
However, I always add a qualifier in case I needed to backpedal.

I say, “My normal bill rate is $xx/hr…” and then watch their reaction.
Opening Offers: Yours

- If they accept my rate without hesitation, I make a mental note to raise my rates!

- But if they react negatively, I can quickly add, “...but I’m flexible given that this is a long-term contract [given the state of the economy, etc.].”
Opening Offers: Yours

- If they react negatively and I have to backpedal, I also add, “What bill rate did you have in mind…?”

- I have found that even when people say they didn’t have a bill rate in mind, they really did. They just didn’t want to tell me until they heard what I was going to say first.
Opening Offers: Yours

- Perhaps the number with which you opened was out of range for a Technical Writer but might be in range for a Senior Technical Writer.

- In that case you are now negotiating seniority and title, not just salary!
There will be times when the other party objects to your estimate, your prices, etc.

The trick to handling objections is to discern *why* they are objecting and respond accordingly.
Handling Objections

- Be able to defend your numbers:
  - What value do you add?
  - Have you saved your company money?
  - Have you *made* your company money?
  - Increased customer satisfaction?
  - *Why* should a company pay you what you want?
  - The employer’s viewpoint: WIIFM?
Handling Objections

Be able to defend your numbers:

- Project plans
- Prototypes
- Historical data
- Other sources of hard data
Handling Objections

- If you can show exactly how you came up with your numbers, the negotiation will swing away from your numbers and onto the scope of the project.

- Example: If your bid is 20% more than what the client has budgeted, you can say, “What if we replace the installation guide with a quick-start guide and move the reference information onto your website later…?”
Notice in that example you are now negotiating **scope** not your bill rate to or hours to get the project under budget.

Bonni Graham did a great presentation at LavaCon on “How to Create a Database to Track Historical Data and Bid Future Jobs.”

Email me and I’ll send you the link
Handling Objections

- Another way to “handle” an objection is to just give them what they want.

- I once had a client say, “We want to bring you on, but your bill rate is $75/hr and the max we can pay is $72.50.”

- $2.50/hr was absolutely in the range of what I was willing to give up to get that contract, so all I had to do was agree!
When to Walk Away

- There are times when the other party will ask for something that is simply not acceptable.
- If you absolutely cannot get them to change, then one option is to simply walk away.
- Indemnification story
The Importance of Listening

- I’ve heard it said that all salesmen talk too much. The same thing can be said for negotiators.

- You should *listen* more than *talk*.

- Find out what is important to the *other* side and respond accordingly.
Most people consider making and receiving concessions as part of the negotiation process.

Some people would rather say, “Just give me your best offer” and take it or leave it.

But most people expect you to give up something, or they won’t feel you are negotiating in good faith.
Negotiating: Give and Take

- So add things to your “wish list” that you are willing to negotiate away.
- That way you can make concessions while still preserving what’s important to you.
- What do you think would happen if you asked for only the exact things you want?
- Plus, they might just say “OK” and give you everything you asked for!
Part of your homework can include getting bids/offers/estimates from other parties.

You can then say, “XYZ offered me _____, can you match that?”

That can be used as a good closing technique.

It is easy to walk away from a negotiation if you have a better offer elsewhere.
A Caution to Buyers

- *Before* you start negotiating, do your homework and decide how much time, effort and money you are willing to invest in the process.

- Then stick to your plan, and be willing to walk away if you are not getting what you want.
Exercise

- Identify what you need.
- Decide what would be great, what would be acceptable, when to walk away
- Tell the other party why you are there, but also build some rapport
- Find out what is important to them
- Use that data to handle objections (if any) and negotiate an acceptable deal
Recap

- Negotiation is the art of giving up as little of what you have in order to get what you want.
- Take time to build rapport with the other party.
- Decide before you start what you want, what you are willing to give up, and when to walk away.
Recap

- When possible let the other party make the opening offer.
- Be able to defend your numbers and estimates.
- When possible, negotiate project scope, not your bill rate.
- Go for a Win-Win agreement.
Recap

- Remember to ask questions in a negotiations (including interviews).
- You cannot address their concerns unless you know what they are.
- Find and negotiate with Your People.
Recommended Reading

How To Outnegotiate Anyone (Even a Car Dealer!) by Leo Reilly

Zero to Zillionaire by Chellie Campbell

8 Foolproof Steps to Financial Peace of Mind
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